

# **The Macomb Daily**

## **Lake St. Clair promotion: Get businesses involved**

**Hackel said he looks forward to day where lake has several public beaches**

**By Gordon Wilczynski - Macomb Daily Staff Writer – March 18, 2011**

**Business owners near Macomb County's major waterway attended a meeting last week sponsored by the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative Marine Business to see what's being done to improve the local economy and increase tourism.**

**Attendees said they liked what they heard from Eric Foster of Belle Maer Marina in Harrison Township, Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel and former Harrison Township Supervisor and current state Rep. Tony Forlini.**

**Foster said that while television ads promoting "Pure Michigan" predominately support northern Michigan businesses, an initiative promoting Lake St. Clair and Macomb County businesses from St. Clair Shores to New Baltimore will come from the businesses that are located along the popular waterway.**

**"We need to get businesses involved," Foster said.**

**Donna Flaherty, owner of Gifts Afloat in St. Clair Shores and president of the Nautical Mile Association, said the speakers were inspirational. She and friend Jean Rousseau, a St. Clair Shores business owner on Jefferson Avenue, said promoting Lake St. Clair is at the top of their list. They both said many people living in southeast Michigan have no idea what Lake St. Clair has to offer. Many people are looking to go fishing or boating, or finding a good place to eat or a boutique to buy nautical trinkets for the boat or house.**

**Hackel reminded everyone that Lake St. Clair is a tremendous fresh water resource. He said he envisions the day when there are several beaches for the general public, places to rent personal watercraft and fishing boats, more places to eat and more hotels and motels.**

**Hackel also said Lake St. Clair is a 52-week-a-year proposition. He said people swim, boat and fish on the lake during the warm summer months and go duck hunting during the fall. Then some ice fish and skate all winter long.**

**He said the lake is a jewel and business owners and the government have to find ways to promote it.**

**"As a kid I grew up in Warren and knew nothing about Lake St. Clair," Hackel said. "I later got a true understanding what Lake St. Clair was all about."**

**County water planner Gerry Santoro said Macomb County has an asset in Lake St. Clair that's been underutilized. He said promoting the lake is an economy driven issue right in "our backyard."**

**“What we have here is the envy of the world,” he said. “This area has great assets and the Great Lakes area represents 20 percent of the nation’s economy.”**

**He said the Clinton River runs through 62 communities that represent 1.4 million people.**

**“People need a place to re-create,” Santoro said. “People need a place to see, do and buy something.”**

**But he said a problem with Lake St. Clair is it doesn’t have many areas for accessibility.**

**“What we’re talking about here isn’t a dream, it’s a reality,” Hackel said. “This organization is going to make things happen.**

**“It’s our main stream, it’s our main street.”**